

Judicial branch starts eviction resolution program

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Okanogan County Courthouse

OLYMPIA – The state judicial branch has developed an eviction resolution program that can be implemented in all Superior Courts.

The branch is concerned that a large influx of evictions may hit communities and courts after state and federal COVID-19 moratoria on evictions are lifted. The program aims to require problem-solving steps before the cases go to court.

The program was implemented last week in six pilot counties with the majority of the state's eviction cases – Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane and Thurston.

Goal of the program is to bring all parties together with trained eviction resolution specialists and rent assistance program staff to explore solutions, including access to state and local rent assistance, and achievable payment plans that will help tenants retain their housing and divert many situations from the legal eviction process.

The program was developed by the Washington State Superior Court Judges' Association work group in partnership with the state Office of Civil Legal Aid. The work group that developed the program included judicial officers, rental housing industry representatives, tenant advocates, civil legal aid attorneys and dispute resolution center representatives.

Federal and Washington state moratoria on evictions are set to expire Dec. 31. Funding from the federal CARES Act will be used to establish the pilot program, which will operate in accordance with standing orders issued by each participating Superior Court.